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ABSTRACT

This report considers some of the expectations, conventions, and strategies relied upon by Anglo children when they are participating in the speech event of storytelling, with particular focus on the children's interweaving of narrational and metanarrational speech. The data were obtained from white middle-class schoolchildren, aged six through nine years, who attended after-school day-care centers at two Austin, Texas, public elementary schools. The children in freely-chosen groups were tape-recorded while they were telling stories. The data were examined for information concerning their expectations and techniques for managing peer-group storytelling. It is generally understood that as intra-performance, metanarrative commentary, the interjections by the participants in the group call attention to various aspects of story-telling in progress, and are interwoven with the discourse of the story-telling itself. In this case, however, it seemed that the children frequently judged such interjections to be threatening to their presentations, or sometimes, as contextual information, and so not part of the narrative proper. The findings are discussed in relation to current discussion of child-discourse and folkloristics. (AMH)

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Interjected Routines as Metanarrative Commentary

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INTERJECTED ROUTINES AS METANARRATIVE COMMENTARY

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(1) Joe (7): and then they were walking, and then they, no, came home, and then they ( )

David (7): (pulled off each other's clothes

Joe: Nuh-uh, and they went in the dark closet, and then [pause] she he took off [pause] her [pause]

David: clothes, and then they

Joe: Nuh-uh, he took off her shirt [continues the story]

(2) David (5): and um the boy came over, and said, "You want to go into the closet?" and um she said, "Welll." "I'll give you a piece of bubble gum," so she so she um [pause] I mean, oh [pause]

Steve (8): I wanna I wanna tell it

David: No, you all are interrupting me

[interruptive routine continues]

Introduction

As Erving Goffman and other students of everyday life have repeatedly pointed out, face-to-face interaction does not simply happen to its participants; it is achieved by them. A major part of that achievement rests on the participants' negotiating of interpretative 'frames of reference' (Goffman 1974), their assessing of what 'it' is that can be understood as 'going on.' Although within the last five years research in the area of child discourse has emphasized "the sorts of data... that the child gathers from context in constructing and interpreting messages" (Keller-Cohen 1978: 454), we as yet know relatively little

about how children negotiate interactional focus and contextual frame in their handling of expressive (folkloric) interaction.

This report considers some of the expectations, conventions, and strategies relied upon by Anglo youngsters when participating in the speech event of storytelling. By their own choice, these children focused on the telling of traditional narratives, that is, on stories that had been previously circulated within the peer-group and which, therefore, were already known to most of the participants. In this report, I will not categorize the narratives as 'items' of folklore nor consider individual stories as discrete segments of discourse. Instead, I am interested in the children's 'interweaving' (Boggs and Watson-Gegeo 1978) of narrational and metanarrational speech. The data--youngsters' intra-performance commentary--are examined for information concerning the children's expectations for and techniques for managing peer-group storytelling.

Metanarration is treated as speech that refers to the interface between participants' prior and in situ understandings of narrative interaction. Metanarrative utterances serve the functions of "establishing the position of the narrator and the audience members vis-a-vis the story, call[ing] attention to the problems and processes of narration as an act, and provid[ing] a frame for interpretation" (Babcock 1977:73). This discourse 'talks about' contextual relationships, those judged by participants to be relevant to an understanding of the multifaceted 'it' that can be summed up, however insufficiently, in the term 'storytelling.' Although the children I worked with did not restrict their metanarration to any single juncture within an event, I will concentrate on comments produced by the audience members during the course of a narrator's storytelling. Their comments referenced various aspects of the situation-at-hand, but we will look most closely at those that talked about a storyteller's presentation of a tale.[1] Most 'interjected' comments were interpreted by the narrator as 'interruptive.' That is, they were 'named' by him in his next turn-at-talking as speech that

interfered with his activities as the storyteller. Excerpts (1) and (2) (above) illustrate typical interjections receiving this ratification. Important to a storyteller's acknowledgment of an interruption was his understanding of that comment in terms of ideal conventions and values associated with peer-group narration. These conventions allowed a storyteller certain privileges: among them was the right to display knowledge of a story without interference from the audience members.

An interjected comment produced by an audience member represents but one of the constituent utterances of what I describe as the 'interjected routine.' Both the narrator and the audience member contribute to the production of this stretch of verbal interaction and to that of its sub-class, the 'interruptive routine.' Some of the utterances used within these routines were couched within the 'narrative frame' (McDowell 1975). Others were explicitly metanarrational in function. The status of still other utterances was emergent, depending on how they were defined during the course of the talk.

After describing the informants from whom I obtained my data, I turn to some of the problems involved in investigating the topic of children's metanarration. The children's ideal expectations for storytelling and the ways in which these rules are applied in actual interaction are then considered. I describe the patterned ways in which the children interwove narrational and metanarrational speech in their interruptive routines. The report concludes with a brief look at other types of interjected routines and with a discussion of the relevance of its findings.

Data Sources

The data were obtained during the school year of 1974-1975 from white, middle-class schoolchildren, aged six through nine years, who attended after-school day-care centers at two Austin, Texas, public elementary schools.[2] The children's grade levels spanned the first through the fourth grade. The youngsters were usually interviewed on

the playground, an area which they regarded as their domain, much more so than the halls of the schoolbuildings where we were forced to go during bad weather. Membership in the groups was self-selected, and the children were free to join in or leave as they wished. Usually between two to eight children were present during a session. I encouraged them to handle matters such as topic selection, turn-taking arrangements, and disputes according to their own interests and rules. I remained with them as a participant-observer to protect my tape recording equipment and to prompt their attention toward the doing of folklore. Aside from the use of elicitations at the beginning of a session or when the children's attention lagged, or my interrupting when anyone's physical safety was threatened, I tried to remain quiet and to let the children manage the interactions themselves.

Although narratives were collected as well from children of kindergarten age, the activities of these youngest informants will be considered only when their interactions parallel in kind those of the six- through nine-year-olds. The kindergarteners' management of narrative interaction differed in several respects from that of the older children. To the kindergarteners, storytelling was an activity that was carried out with parents or, more frequently, with the teacher in the classroom. As the collecting sessions progressed and I did not reinforce the kindergarteners' 'rules for polite storytelling' (my term) nor stringently chastized the 'nasty' language (their term) that seemed to represent a reaction against them, the kindergarteners' approaches to storytelling became diffuse. As they explored varied arrangements, politeness rules were vehemently supported and rudely attacked, and squabbles over personal antagonisms became lengthy and, at times, vindictive.[3] To the first through fourth graders, on the other hand, storytelling was something that was done with one's peers. These older children seemed to share a basic idea of what narrative interaction, constituted within the peer-group, entailed. They consistently downplayed idiosyncratic comments or framed personal responses to ongoing narration in terms of talk about participant role

(i.e., the narrator's or the audience member's) responsibilities. The processes of storytelling seemed to offer no major surprises to these children, as if their understandings of how to get things done represented a public and relatively stable knowledge.

Further contrasts between the kindergarteners and the six- through nine-year-olds can be described in terms of their intra-performance commentary. The older children posed interjections less frequently than the kindergarteners and argued over them less extensively. Whereas discussions among the kindergarteners might easily proceed through more than ten turns-at-talking before a narrator resumed his storytelling, the older children usually dispatched the routines within two to four turns. Although twice as many narratives (56 to 28) were obtained from twice as many older children (17 to 8) as kindergarteners, the former produced interjections on the average of a little more than once per story (69 interjected routines).[4] The youngest audience members, on the other hand, spoke up almost three times per narrative.[5]

Although the youngsters in the first and second grades (6-8 years) were less self-confident in those behaviors that marked the activities of the oldest children (8-9 years) and were more prone to the attitudes characteristic of the kindergarteners (5-6 years), the age/grade level differences in attitudes towards storytelling among the first through fourth graders were less pronounced than those that existed between these children, considered as a group, and the kindergarteners. The group of children whose narrative interaction I will be treating, therefore, consists of six- through nine-year-olds who, in contrast to children who had just entered elementary school, appeared to have a fair idea of what storytelling within the peer-group involved, and they had had (I presume) at least one to four years of experience at acquiring that skill.

Children's Metanarration

Children's use of speech (or behavior) in establishing a frame of reference for the understanding of other speech (or behavior) has

received some attention within the past few years (e.g., Cazden 1975; Gumperz and Herasimchuk 1975; Farrar 1976; Garvey 1977; Schwartzman 1978). Of youngsters' metacommunicative talk concerning folkloric, specifically narrational, presentations, however, the critical literature has been relatively silent.[6] This lack of attention stems in part from our impression that children just don't produce much in the way of 'oral literary criticism' (Dundes 1966). Researchers have found that even when youngsters are able to offer explicit comments on narrative genre, the narrative text, or the storyteller's relationship to his audience and the latter's evaluation of the performance, their metanarrative lexicon is brief and limited in its descriptiveness (McDowell 1975).

Recent work in the acquisition of communicative competence suggests an explanation for this terseness. In proposing that explanation, Jenny Cook-Gumperz (1975) draws on, yet goes beyond, Piaget's (1962) concept of children's 'egocentrism.' Cook-Gumperz suggests that in his attempts to understand verbal interaction, a young child overemphasizes the social principle of 'reciprocity.' He assumes that other people are essentially the same as he and, therefore, notice what he notices about the social world. Whatever the child perceives about a situation, he reasons, his co-participants are also able to perceive. It does not occur to him to distinguish verbally among the components of an event. There is no need: the information is available to all. By the time the child is seven or eight, however, he is becoming aware of the limits of the reciprocity principle. Although he will continue to exercise that mode of reasoning throughout the rest of his life, employing it when it is needed, the seven- to eight-year-old's increasing experience in the social world has introduced him to more than that principle can enable him to understand easily. As his experience widens and he tries to express what he perceives, the child is prompted to develop an alternate line of reasoning. This Cook-Gumperz terms the 'reflexivity principle.' The child slowly realizes that although some people may act or think <u>like</u> other people, no one can actually

be the same as another. He comes to recognize the specifics of variation in his environment, and he develops the ability to manipulate variety to suit his own purposes. Aiding the seven- to eight-year-old in his desire to communicate -- to render in words his perception of differences -- and in part prompted by that desire, is a concurrent and rapid expansion of his linguistic vocabulary. Yet speech is more than a referential tool, and the child learns that the variations of language and in the contexts of its use may themselves be manipulated and talked about:

> The communicative breakthrough for the child begins with the recognition that speech and its associated paralinguistic features create the grounds for their own understanding. The reflexivity principle provides the child with the understanding of how speech provides evidence of its own interpretive frame...[In short, there is a substantial increase in] the child's awareness of "metacommunicative" purposes of the reflexivity principle in language--talk used to control and adjust the setting for further talk with others (156-157).

The introduction of the reflexivity principle is not immediate. Nor when its basic tenets are initially applied in the child's social encounters does that principle quickly take root, pervading all of his social understandings. Although experimentation with this mode of reasoning begins around the age of seven or eight, even nine- and ten-year-olds may have trouble with its perspective. Thus we should not expect that by the age of seven or eight, a child can necessarily manipulate a metacommunicative vocabulary that an adult might find immediately meaningful. Nor should we expect that his burgeoning experimentation with the reflexivity of language will be consistent or pervasive. We can notice though that children of this age are interested, however tentatively and sporadically, in talk that references the channels and the reflexivity of communicative meaning. The children's awareness of interactional focus and of social relationships among participants, though operative in earlier years, emerges at this time as a viable factor in their contributions to peer-group interaction.

The intra-performance commentary that is treated here can be recognized as metacommunicative per se from a researcher's point of view. I do not claim that the Austin youngsters had developed their skills to the point that they could have or did talk self-consciously about the understandings that I attribute to them.[7] I do suggest, though, that the children were of an age at which their rules for storytelling had become shared, and, secondly, that their intra-performance commentary functioned on a tacit level as the metanarrational discussion of those rules. And, thirdly, I suggest that this commentary can be examined for information regarding the general nature of those rules and their event-specific applicability.

Rules for Narrative Interaction

Basic to the children's understanding of the 'ideal rules' (Goldstein 1971) for storytelling, that is, their expectations regarding what ought to happen (vs. what indeed might happen), was their close associating of three factors: conventions for the allocation of speaking rights, the display of competence in peer-group traditions, and the presentation of a positive self-image (Goffman 1967). This linking of personal values and interactional strategies was not unique to the children's behavior in storytelling. If informed their attitudes towards the demonstration of folkloric competence in other genres as well.

In contrast to other broadly-applicable schemes for the interactional organization of speech,[8] my informants, like other groups of white American youngsters (Lein and Brenneis 1978), showed a preference for sequential patterns of turn-taking. In terms of their folkloric repertoires, the children were attracted to forms, such as riddles, knock-knock routines, and catch routines, that depended on an A-B-A-B participatory pattern. The conventions of these dialogic genres modified the sequential pattern of everyday conversation in several ways (Abrahams 1976). For our purposes, they can be understood as establishing the expectations that the first speaker, participant A,

will begin and conclude the exchange, and, secondly, that he will contribute more resourcefully and/or more frequently than participant B. In catch routines, for example, participant A (the trickster) initiates the interaction and then leads the co-participant, by means of the latter's responses, to the routine's conclusion, an ending that both surprises and embarrasses the co-participant (Roemer 1977). In riddling that is intended to stump the respondent, participant A's (the riddler's) position is strongest when he can propose the question, receive a statement of ignorance about its answer, and then, with a flourish, resolve the incongruities posed in the question by giving its answer. These dialogic genres were understood by the Austin children as allowing participant A control over the interaction, a position of power which the youngsters took pains to defend and exploit.[9]

Several researchers have noticed that children associate the value of personal esteem or 'self-aggrandizement' with the role of the narrator as well. William Labov (1972), who interviewed pre-adolescents through adult-age informants, has pointed out the storyteller's interest in presenting himself in the best possible light. One way a narrator can achieve this, Labov argues, is through his handling of a tale's evaluative clauses. Following Labov, Margaret Brady (1978) has shown that young Navajo storytellers link personal values of self-esteem with the competent referencing of cultural values in their telling of 'skinwalker' stories.[10] For her ten- and eleven-year-old informants, Brady notes, the narrative competence of a storyteller was based on his cultural knowledge as well as in his expressive ability, the latter representing the storyteller's explicit demonstration of knowledge in a comprehensible fashion within a narrative frame.

Among the Austin children, the criteria of knowledge and expressive ability were central to the group's evaluation of both the storyteller's and the audience members' behavior. According to the youngsters' ideal rules, speaking rights were to be maximized in favor of the storyteller to the virtual silencing of the audience members. The

storyteller, not the audience, was accorded the right to display his knowledge of a tale. Narrators were adamant about their position as the storyteller:[11]

(3) Tom (8): and Trouble got lost, so Shutup went to the policeman, and the policeman said [pause]

?: [speaking rapidly:] "What is your name?" and he went, "Shutup." "What is your name?" and he went "Shutup"

* Tom (8): Now, I'm tellin it, boy! "What's your name?" "Shutup"

[continues]

(DS 20:9)

When they served in that participant role, narrators were the chief proponents of this arrangement. Their interest in the personal values of self-aggrandizement contributed to this commitment. For their part, the audience members were expected to show their acceptance of the storyteller's privileges by listening attentively or, at the least, by not interjecting their speech as a competitive focus. In actual interaction, the audience members' tendency (relative to that of their counterparts among the kindergarteners) to let ongoing narration continue suggested their general deference to these expectations. Yet this was a general deference: interjections did occur. By examining both the fact and the nature of that intra-performance commentary, we can gain information about the children's contextual management of ideal expectations.

The group's acknowledgment of a certain child as the next performer occurred in what I will term the 'bidding event.' This type of verbal exchange prefaced almost any folkloric rendering, including the doing of narratives. In bidding for the floor, each potential narrator laid claim to competence in the story that he had in mind. The youngster who ultimately acquired the floor was usually the one who

argued the most effectively for his own competence, for his turn, or for the appeal of 'his' narrative. The most frequently used bid (regardless of the genre being proposed) was the statement "I know one."[12] A claimant's assertion of knowledge implied his command of several capacities, including his knowledge of and expressive ability in the proposed tale (lines 1-2 below):

(4)	1	Sean (8):	Who knows some Aggie jokes?
	2	Steve (8):	I do! I do! I do! Once there was this kid, and
	3		he wanted to buy some pickles, so he bought a pickle, and um [pause]
	4	Lisa (9):	I know this one
	5	Steve:	I do too. I think I told it last time, but I'll
	6		still tell it
	7	Jeff (8):	That's not an Aggie joke
	8	Steve:	I don't care. I'll still tell it. And one day [continues]

By vying for the storyteller's role, a child also implied his awareness of relevant extra-textual matters: for example, the immediate past history of the item's performance (excerpt 4, line 5),[13] its genre (excerpt 4, line 7), or its tale type:

(5)	Cami (7):	in a old cottage there lived three bears, a ma- a papa one, no, a great papa one, and a middle size one
	Amy (6):	You said you'd do the Three Little Pigs
	Cami:	a middle size one, and a little baby one [continues]

These claims were associated with the storyteller's role. Once a child assumed that role, he was expected to demonstrate his competence with respect to the claims, whether these had been stated explicitly or merely implied during the bidding. A storyteller was particularly vulnerable to the audience members' criticism at the beginning of his

narration. At that point, his claims were fresh in his listeners' minds, and especially so for those who had lost the floor in the bidding. If a storyteller faltered during the initial stage of his rendering,[14] his hesitancy might be interpreted as indicating a lack of competence. An enterprising audience member who made that interpretation might not be content merely to offer appropriate narrative words or clauses in support or in criticism. Instead, he might choose to bid in an outright fashion for the (in his view) tenuously occupied storyteller's role:

(12)	Eric (7):	I got one, and you're going to like it [material omitted] ok, mine's kinda like Am- Lisa's
	?:	Say the one about
	Eric:	Um, let me see if I remember it
	Steve (8):	Hey, I got one! Can I tell mine?
	Eric:	Ok, ok, one time
	David (5):	I want to play Duck Duck Goosey!
	Eric:	this

[interjections continue]

If after a storyteller began the audience members accepted his assumption of the narrator's role, they rarely then offered intra-performance bids, even if his storytelling faltered. Instead, their subsequent interjections referenced facets of his storytelling. The comments could be explicitly metanarrational in function:

(7)	Megan (5):	and she was picking flowers, and then the wolf and he um and
	* Silke (5):	You're doing this story buckwards
	Megan:	No, I'm not

[interjections continue]

The audience members could attempt co-narration:

(8) Cami (7): they went out and um [pause] a few minutes later there's a little girl came, and her name was Goldilocks, and [pause]

Jimmy (7): she went to visit their house

Cami: and she knocked on the door [material omitted] no one answered, so she opened

Jimmy: the door

Cami: she's trying to see if the door opened, and it was open, so she opened the door, and then [pause]

Jimmy: went inside

Cami: and, yeah, don't tell me, and then she went inside [continues]

Or they could supply narrative words or clauses when the storyteller's speech was marked by pauses, mispronunciations, or verbal hesitations:

(9) Ann (6): and then and and the mother said, and and the um and um [italics mine]

Susan (6): Granny Lu

Ann: and Granny Lu said, "What!"[continues]

In any case, the audience members could capitalize on what appeared to them to be evidence of the storyteller's confusion and loss of control.

An important point is this: pauses, verbal hesitations, etc., were not infrequent. That any individual hesitation, etc., could be understood as indicating a storyteller's failing competence was not a matter of the utterances' linguistic form or of any 'inherent' meaning, but of the interpretation which an audience member chose to place upon those utterances as an impetus and a rationale for his own contribution. Regardless of their function from the storyteller's perspective, the production of pauses and hesitations provided an audience member with a 'space,' an opportunity, in which to insert his speech without an extensive overlapping of the storyteller's discourse. There was thus a better chance that his contribution would be heard. Furthermore

because the children concentrated on narratives that had already been circulated within the peer-group, chances were that for any narrative that a storyteller might propose, there were audience members present who knew the tale as well or perhaps better than he. Despite the fact that it was the narrator who had been ratified to display competence in a tale, the audience members also invested a positive self-esteem in their own acquaintance with an ongoing story. Their interjected comments represented their displays of that knowledge. Indeed, some of their interjections talked about this knowledge directly:

(10) Jack (7): and he came walking down the street one day
Wes (7): I heard this. I heard this
Jack: and his friend named Spooky [material omitted]
and Casper was asleep, and um [pause] and
Wes: Oh, I know this one ( )
Jack: and then Spooky came in [continues]

Intra-narrational statements attesting to knowledge were usually ignored by storytellers and were not treated as grounds for argument. They perhaps underscored the fact that the basic materials were public property, shared within the peer-group.[15] The stories' actual production of narrative words and clauses, however, was another matter. As the excerpt below illustrates, an audience member's attempt to couch his utterances within the narrative frame represented the factor that could most often prompt a storyteller's stern defense:

(11) 1 Kerry (6): and so that night she died, and so he took um her
2 golden arm, and he buried it, and then he heard,
3 "Where's--my--gold--en--arm? Where--is--my--golden--
4 arm?"
5 Wes (7): You forgot the part where he took it away, right:
6 Kerry: Uh unh ["no"]
7 Wes: Uh huh ["yes"]
8 Kerry: (and he took it away [the extent of the overlap
9 Wes: (and he took it away is unclear]

10 Kerry: and then he ran down the stairs, and he heard, "Where
11 is my golden arm?" again, and so, I forgot the rest
12 Wes: Well, then, I'll tell you the real story. There was
13 this lady and this man, and um
14 Kerry: You started all over!
15 Wes: I know, but let me say it!
16 Kerry: and then
17 Wes: Kerry, let me say it. KERRY!
18 [they engage in a shouting match]
19 Wes: Kerry, stop it!
20 Kerry: and she heard, "Where is the golden arm?" and I
21 forgot the rest!
22 [fieldworker intervenes]

(DS 16:7/8)

This interaction is atypical in at least two respects: (1) rarely did narrators admit as blatantly as Kerry to their faltering competence, and (2) even rarer was the wholesale intra-event transfer of the storyteller's role from one child to another. Yet the interaction is instructive regarding a technique commonly used by narrators. In the above set of several routines, the audience member begins the story (lines 12-13), apparently assuming that with her comment "I forgot the rest" Kerry has relinquished her rights as the storyteller. She, after all, had openly admitted that she could not live up to her bidding event claims. As part of her defense, Kerry tries to reassert her control over the storytelling. She attempts this by reframing the audience member's comments as metanarration (lines 16, 20).

An ideal expectation which the Austin children almost always upheld concerned the storyteller's right to decide what speech would be part of the narration proper and what would be relegated to the background status of metanarration.[16] When storytellers rejected an audience member's comment, they would make that rejection clear (e.g.,

"yeah, don't tell me" [excerpt 8]). Their reaction was obvious in its defining of what was narrative and what was not. Even when storytellers accepted the information offered by an interjected comment, they rarely allowed the comment as uttered by the audience member to stand as part of the storytelling. Narrators would deny an interjection of this status by repeating or restating the words/information in their subsequent turn-at-talking:

(12) Amy (6): then the other one came in, and said
Cami (7): the third one
Amy: the third one came in, and said [continues]

Only on one occasion was an audience member's comment allowed to represent part of the narration. This occurred when the storyteller interrupted herself to solicit information from the audience member:

(13) Cami (7): and then he said the same thing, and he heard [softly to Amy:] now, what was it again?
Amy (6): Now I got cha, now I'm gonna eat cha
Cami: Yeah, and then he jumped out of the window [continues]

This was the closest any of the storytellers came to accepting co-narration as an appropriate arrangement for the production of peer-group-shared tales.

To sum up: ideal expectations maximized the storyteller's privileges, whereas audience members were expected to listen to the rendering or, at the least, not to interject their own speech as a competitive focus. In actual interaction, children's attitudes towards these expectations depended upon several factors. In addition to influences that have not been discussed here, such as an individual child's immediate strategies or his commitment to personal relationships of friendship or enmity, a youngster's stance depended on the participant role he had adopted. When a child served as the storyteller, he defended these expectations. When he served as an audience member, his attitude could become ambivalent.

At the level of their folkloric repertoires, the children were most attracted to forms that provided for an asymmetrical allocation of speaking rights. The participant who had acquired the privilege of beginning a traditional piece assumed that he would be in charge of its presentation. Storytellers closely associated the narrator's role with the demonstration of narrative competence and with the presentation of self. Since ideal expectations prescribed that a narrator would be the only participant ratified to display knowledge, storytellers regarded interjections as 'out-of-turn' exercisings of the audience members' competence. Storytellers, therefore, were not interested in upholding the ideal rules for the rules' own sake. Instead, their commitment, like the challenges of the audience members, served their own self-interests.

Interruptive Routines

By referencing their expectations for storytelling in talk that cited instances of the rules' application, the children established a context for the ongoing narration (Boggs and Watson-Gegeo 1978). Or, to be more precise, that referencing established several contexts of importance to the youngsters' understanding of the current activity. One set of contexts, or frames of reference, was represented by their expectations of what should and could occur. The appropriateness of a narrator's behavior was evaluated in terms of these expectations. Another frame of reference was introduced by the production of the interjected commentary itself. By negotiating the status of the constituent utterances of the routines, the children in effect talked about what they would at any moment accept as narration and what they would regard as background discourse. At the same time, by 'interweaving' (Boggs and Watson-Gegeo 1978) narrative and metanarrational utterances in patterned ways, they reaffirmed their implicit but group-shared understandings of how to get things done in storytelling.

In proposing the concept of the interruptive routine, I have drawn on Boggs and Watson-Gegeo's discussion (1978:377; Watson 1975; Watson-Gegeo and Boggs 1977) of the 'communicative routine' as a "particular kind of exchange in which an expected utterance by one speaker will trigger or provoke one of a set of expected rejoinders by another speaker."[17] In the preceding section, I indicated some of the features of a storyteller's behavior which could prompt an audience member's interjection. I also examined why a storyteller would then want to respond to the interjection. Yet, as Erving Goffman (1976) has pointed out, syntagmatic relationships between the things that get done in interaction may be both progressive and reflexive. This was the case with the children's routines.

Interruptive routines involved the participants' exercising of four interactional 'moves' (Goffman 1961). Each can be distinguished in terms of the particular stance taken by its proponent. The moves were 'reflexive' (Goffman 1976) with respect to one another, as each couched the speech of the preceding move within a new frame of reference. Routines, therefore, were not begun as such. The speech associated with the first move could be identified in those terms only later, by means of the frame of reference provided by some subsequent move.

The first and second moves were taken by the storyteller during the course of his narration. The first move involved a demonstration of narrative competence according to the claims associated with the narrator's role. His stance was centered in his knowledge of the story and in his ability to express that knowledge.

The second move involved the storyteller's 'naming' as incorrect, inappropriate, etc., some aspect of his preceding narration. In the most obvious occurrence of the second move, the storyteller explicitly announced his confusion, his forgetfulness, or his desire to change some already-told aspect of the tale. In this way, he reframed his preceding narration as 'speech-to-be-talked-about.' Perhaps because

the second move in this instance involved obvious criticism, the storyteller's intention was that only he should be allowed to produce the commentary:

(14) [from excerpt 2]

	1	1st move	David (5)	"I'll give you a piece of bubble gum,"
	2			so she so she um [pause]
*	3	2nd move		I mean, oh [pause]
	4	3rd move	Steve (8):	I wanna I wanna tell it
	5		David:	No, you all are interrupting me

Routines, which would then be described as interjected, could end with the narrator's second-move utterance.[18]

In the absence of the storyteller's explicit self-criticism, hesitation utterances such as "so she so she um [pause]" (line 2 above) could be interpreted by an audience member as serving a second-move function: that of the narrator's stalling as he tried to remember what came next in the narrative. As we have seen, hesitations were susceptible to interpretation as indicating the storyteller's faltering competence.

On those occasions when a narrator did not employ either explicit commentary or hesitations, the second move can be associated with some aspect of his rendering that an audience member judged to be inaccurate. This evaluation was based on the audience member's prior knowledge of the tale. He, we can infer, heard details that did not correspond to his own understanding of the narrative. His interjected comment then referenced the inaccuracy:

(15)	1st/2nd move	Steve (8):	[preceding utterances of the narration followed by:] and the boy said, "Will you take off will you lay down in my bed?" and she said, "Well I may-be
*	3rd move	Lisa (9):	That's not how it goes
	4th move	Steve:	Well, you take yours, and I'll take

mine, [pause] and he said, I'll
give you [continues]

An audience member's third move interjection made aspects of the narration noticeable or reinforced their already marked noticeability. As a result of this interjection, the focus and the extent of the talk became negotiable, no longer subject (as with the first and second moves) to the storyteller's unilateral control. The interjection reframed the narration and, by extension, the storyteller's competence as topics for at least a two-party discussion.

An audience member's production of a third-move comment did not in itself qualify that statement as an interruption. Ratification of the comment as interfering with the storyteller's presentation came in the fourth move, which was made by the storyteller. This ratification could be marked:

(1) linguistically, through a direct address of the audience member (e.g., "Now be quiet!" [excerpt 16]), through implicit address (e.g., "No, [pause] when he he came..." [excerpt 19]), or through the storyteller's correcting his narration in accordance with the information provided in the interjection (e.g., excerpt 17):

(2) paralinguistically, through the storyteller's use of intonation, pauses, or through his speed of delivery;

(3) kinesically, through gesture or facial expression;

(4) proxemically, through a shift in body posture, or

(5) through some combination of these means.

If the narrator made no obvious reference to the interjection but instead continued as if no comment had been made, the routine thus produced was interjected, rather than interruptive. Of the sixty-nine routines produced by the children, almost two-thirds (44) contained fourth-move reactions that acknowledged the interjection as an interruption.

Storytellers produced fourth-move reactions when they accepted the words/information of the audience member's comment (excerpt 19) as well as when they rejected the comment (excerpt 16). There is evidence, though, that even if a storyteller viewed the interjection as justified, he still might have resented the intrusion into his narration.[19]

The terminal boundary of the fourth move, and thus of the routine, must be described as open-ended. It is not always an easy matter to say 'when' a storyteller's reaction 'ended' and the narration picked up again in a 'normal' fashion. If an interjection pointed to serious difficulties in plot for example, and if that criticism were accepted by the storyteller, then the effect of the comment could extend throughout the rest of the telling of the narrative. Even if the storyteller rejected the comment, its third-move production could influence the subsequent narration. This could occur, for example, if as a result of the interjection the storyteller had to backtrack in terms of plot in re-establishing his train of thought and his command of the floor (lines 7-9 below):[20]

(16)	1	1st/2nd move	Shay (5):	she got some dessert, she ate it, and
	2			she went one [high voice:] bong, bong,
	3			bong [normal voice:] and then she went
				she she was through
	4	3rd move	7:	she went to answer the door
	5	4th move	Shay:	Be quiet! be quiet
	6	3rd move	Toby (6):	she went to answer the
	7	4th move	Shay:	Now be quiet! she the door rung,
	8			[high voice:] bong, dong, dong [normal
	9			voice:] she went to answer it [continues]

At its most obvious level of organization, therefore, an interruptive routine consisted of a four-move sequence: the storyteller's narration, his explicit noting of expressive inability, an audience

member's challenge, and the narrator's ratification of that comment as an interruption.[21] In the case of a four-move interjected routine, the final move would be represented by the storyteller's continuing narration, with no obvious reference to the audience member's comment.

Variations on the four-move pattern were not elaborate. They could involve the storyteller's delivering his reaction over more than one turn at talking (excerpt 16, lines 5, 7 above) or more than one audience member producing a third-move comment (lines 4, 6). Since interjected routines occurred during the course of narration, a storyteller's turn-at-talking could encompass several moves:

(17)	1st/2nd move	Steve (5):	and then he had a lot of beans, and then he fart! and then it went [laughs]
	3rd move	Jeff (8):	No, no, I I think it went to the next state
	4th/1st/2nd move	Steve:	Yeah, it went to the next state [pause] and uh [pause] and that night he was watchin the news, and it said uh uh (
	3rd move	Jeff:	(No, no! he did it one more time, and then the last time
	4th move	Steve:	Oh yeah! [pause] then he did it one more time [continues]

Other Interjected Routines

The criterion of the storyteller's fourth-move acknowledgment represents the primary distinction between interruptive and other interjected routines. This difference, though, rests on matters of interpreted function that were made explicit by the children themselves. As we have seen, most third-move comments (44 of 69) were ratified as interruptions. The third-move comments employed in the remainder of the corpus of routines (25 of 69) were ignored, not heard, or were acknowledged in a way that I did not record. Included within this

group are statements that, like comments that were acknowledged, talked about the preceding narration, statements of knowledge, and statements of positive evaluation (line 10 below):

(18) 1 Jimmy (7): [in a deep voice:] "I'll eat you up [pause] and um
2 [Jody (7) silently joins the group and sits down]
3 Cami (7): [to DR:] His name's Jody
4 Jimmy: and he said
5 boy: [outside the group to the group's members:] All
6 of us are going in [= recess is over]
7 Jimmy: "Don't eat me. There's a bigger one comin [pause] up
8 up next,"and then [pause] he said, "Ok
9 Cami: [to boy:] We know [pause]
10 [to group:] Here's come the part I like
11 Jimmy: um he said
12 [interjections continue]

Also included were: comments employing phonological or semantic speech play, which may have been intended as positive evaluations, comments on the storytelling as a group activity (line 2 above),[22] and comments that talked about activities in the immediate vicinity that competed with storytelling as a focus for attention (lines 5-6 above).

Statements of knowledge, as mentioned earlier, may have been heard as underscoring the fact that the narrative represented shared knowledge; statements of positive evaluation may have been interpreted as supporting, rather than as challenging, the storyteller's competence; comments referencing activities outside the group may have been judged as talking about happenings beyond the storyteller's control.

That these comments were <u>usually</u> not ratified as interruptions, though, did not mean that they were inherently immune from it:

(19) Sean (8): and his mother said [high stuttering voice:]
"Y-y-y-yes [normal voice:] you may
Steve (8): [undertone:] Y-y-y-yes

Sean: No, [pause] when he he came [continues]

(20) Steve (8): that said, "I wanna go over there on that house," [pause] and the other one said

boy: [enters the group:] What you guys tellin?

Steve: The Three Fleas

[interjections continue]

The quality of 'interruptiveness,' therefore, was not inherent to a comment itself but stemmed from what a participant made of that comment.

Discussion of Findings

Interjected routines depend on the participants' making a series of interactional moves. The condition of reflexivity achieved between consecutively-produced moves 'ties' the interjected comments to preceding and subsequent discourse. As intra-performance, metanarrative commentary, the routines call attention to various aspects of storytelling-in-progress. Yet because this commentary takes both a 'backward' and a 'forward' look at activity, the utterances of the routines are interwoven with the discourse of the storytelling itself.

This interpretation of the routines was not that taken by the children themselves. Precisely because the commentary could mesh easily with a narrator's presentation, storytellers frequently judged interjections to be threatening to their presentations. The issue of knowledgeable expressive ability gave rise to the tension that could exist between a narrator and his audience members. Least threatening to anyone's position, since the storytelling had not yet begun, was children's use of the statement "I know one" in pre-performance bidding events. Although the youngsters vied competitively for the storyteller's role, no single claim to knowledge could be demonstrated as more credible than any other. The bidding was concerned with the asserting and argumentative defense of claims, and not with the act of narration. After a particular child had begun his narration, his

storytelling, he hoped, would serve as the primary focus for the group's attention. During this narration, however, audience members could draw some of the attention to themselves by asserting their own knowledge of the tale. Despite this fact, statements of knowledge were not usually responded to as threats to the narrator's position. The statements merely re-affirmed the fact that the stories represented public knowledge. By remarking "I know this one," an audience member asserted that he had heard the tale before and had recalled the fact of his knowledge. As in a bidding event, such statements amounted to unsubstantiated claims. Interjections that were interpreted as challenging of the storyteller were those in which the audience members offered segments of the narrative. Their intra-performance supplying of narrative words and clauses could most often prompt a storyteller's stern defense. Even when a storyteller (however begrudgingly) noted that an interjection was justified, thus admitting that his control had indeed faltered, he would inevitably reassert his position by manipulating the 'boundaries' of the narration itself. The storyteller would treat the interjection as backgrounded, contextual information and not as part of the narrative proper.

These represent some of the functions and interpretations of intra-performance commentary that were at least implicitly available to the children. In the following we can consider how the findings relate to current discussion within the areas of child discourse and folkloristics.

Interjected routines allowed the children to foreground features of context and thereby to establish contexts for narration. Jenny Cook-Gumperz and John Gumperz (1978) have recently argued that contexts are not composed of fixed entities and static concepts, nor do they have a consistent and unilateral influence upon the 'text' of discourse. The dynamic qualities of the 'textual/contextual' interface, the authors continue, are especially problematic for children. Youngsters' at first tentative exploration of the nature of foregrounded

and backgrounded features in verbal interaction challenges their accustomed perceptions of the social world. By way of a response to that confusion, children tend to overgeneralize and overemphasize what they are coming to notice about figure-ground relationships (Cook-Gumperz 1975). The fact that in storytelling, interjected commentary is potentially constitutive of 'text' was of concern to the Austin youngsters. Ideal expectations, though shared among the group's members, could not be consistently relied upon to keep straight the boundaries between activities: for example, between the audience members' commentary and the storyteller's narration. In addition to the interpersonal functions served, the storytellers' insistence at placing those boundaries can be seen as their solution to a specific problem of figure-ground juxtaposition.

Interjected routines further allow children experience with the ways in which talk can be used to control and adjust the setting for further talk -- what Cook-Gumperz (1975:157) discusses as the metacommunicative functions of the reflexivity principle. By their intra-performance commentary, the Austin youngsters reaffirmed their shared expectations as constituting an interpretation frame of reference for that activity called "storytelling." And secondly, they employed those expectations in evaluating individual presentations.

Interjected routines also serve the function of pointing out that general knowledge of a tale may be shared within the group but that individual presentations of that knowledge can justifiably differ. The extent to which the children were able to recognize this fact was unclear. Most of the youngsters seemed inclined to the notion that peer-group membership entailed knowing the stories of the group and that that knowledge was absolute. Now and then, though, individual youngsters would admit that variation did not stem from error but from the relativity of experience and perspective:

(21) Laura (8): and the boys said, "Do a handstand," and said, "Oh no! cause you'll see my panties [pause] and

umm [pause]

* ?: I think I know this one, [pause] well, it's sort of different

(22) [from excerpt]

Lisa (9) That's not how it goes

* Steve (8): Well, you take yours, and I'll take mine, [pause] and he said [continues]

Also unclear is whether the children possessed an understanding of the nature of 'full performance.' There were indications that some sensed that narrative presentations could vary and could be judged according to the skill of the respective storytellers: that is, in terms of their "assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content" (Bauman 1977b:11). Most of the children, though, delivered and responded to presentations in terms of the criterion of knowledgeable expressive ability. Furthermore, the status accruing to a storyteller who displayed knowledge of a tale was transitory, apparently lasting only as long as that child was narrating. The children did not seem to accord a more permanent recognition to the better narrators within the group. They did not generate talk concerning the skill of storytellers, nor did audience members go out of their way to produce verbal statements of appreciation. Instead, the latter relied almost exclusively on paralinguistic cues to signal their positive evaluation. These 'statements' were voiced as intra-performance commentary. At the conclusion of a rendering, bidding for the role of the next storyteller usually began immediately. This sense of urgency on the part of the children may have resulted from the circumstances of the fieldwork situation. And then again, perhaps not. To my knowledge, there have been as yet no inquiries within the folkloristic literature regarding the 'full performance' standards or interests of children.

Finally, many of the expectations, values, and behaviors of narration that I have discussed here could have been cited as evidence of the Austin children's continuing reliance on attitudes of egocentrism. Susan Ervin-Tripp and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan (1977:10) have argued effectively, however, that among researchers a past emphasis on children's egocentrism has led to a serious underestimation of their communicative competence and has served too often as the rationale behind dismissals of youngsters' interactional capabilities. As ethnographers of children's discourse, it seems far more profitable for us to consider the ways in which youngsters' attitudes serve as resources on which they draw in negotiating the processes and problems of communicative and expressive interaction.

FOOTNOTES

1. Not included in the corpus were back channel interjections characterized, for example, by the audience members' laughter or by verbalizations similar to that indicated below:

Sean (8): and the he went to the store again, and this boy said, "Fuck!"
* ?: Oohh!
Sean: and he went home [continues]

2. Funding for this fieldwork was provided by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, Texas. Funds originated in the National Institute of Education. The sixty-nine interjected routines forming the primary corpus were obtained during my own fieldwork. Supplemental routines, marked by their transcript number, were obtained by my colleagues on the Texas Children's Folklore Project and were kindly made available to me by the project supervisor, Richard Bauman.

3. The following, excerpted from a lengthy discussion between kindergarten girls, illustrates the youngest children's person-directed challenges to and defenses of the narrator's role. The participants, Megan and Shay, had been long-standing antagonists. The children's ages are indicated here, and throughout the report, in parentheses after their names:

Megan (5): I know Little Red Riding Hood, [pause] I I wanna do Little Red Riding Hood, that's all I I um I know
Shay (5): [requests a re-playing of her own preceding narration; request denied by DR without mentioning Megan]
Megan: Not not no see no, I have to tell stories
Shay: Ok, go [pushes Megan]
Megan: Aaah! Quit it!
Shay: [taunting tone:] Go!
Megan: Quit it!
Shay: [louder:] Go!
Megan: Ugh! Quit it!
Shay: ['hearable' undertone:] She's the whiniest girl in this class. I wish she was wasn't in our class
Megan: [to DR:] Why why does she keep doing that to me?
DR: I don't know, Megan
Silke (5): Start
Shay: Start!
Megan: [very softly:] Once upon a time
[extended disruption from a child who enters the group]

Megan:	Let me start the story. Once upon there lived [continues narrating, with frequent complaints that the audience members are talking among themselves and not listening to her story]
Shay:	[interjecting into the narration:] I pick Kim to come over when it's time to hear this [points to tape recorder] cause I'm gonna go play, ok? And I pick for Kim to come and tell me. I'll be on the bars, ok? [looks at Megan:] on the big bars
Megan:	Gaw, Shay, you never pick me, [pause] ok, once upon a time there lived [continues]

4. Excerpt no. 1, for example, was counted as containing two routines; excerpt no. 2, one routine.

5. The older children primarily told dirty jokes. Although the six- and seven-year-olds offered some märchen, the eight- and nine-year-olds showed no interest in the genre.

   The texts of the stories, an analysis of their structure as 'narratives' (Labov and Waletzky 1967), and a discussion of the children's developmental acquisition of narrative competence, relative to their cognitive maturation, are given in my unpublished dissertation (Roemer 1977).

6. Investigations representing exceptions to this statement are discussed or referenced in this report.

7. The Austin children did not talk about metanarrative topics in an 'efficient' way in speech events not of their own initiation. My asking them about matters of genre, evaluation, etc., proved to be a fruitless exercise, frustrating to me and possibly to the children themselves.

8. For example, the contrapuntal narration of part-Hawaiian children (Watson-Gegeo and Boggs 1977).

9. Brian Sutton-Smith (1976) and John McDowell (1979) have linked the asymmetrical allocation of speaking rights in riddling to classroom interaction presided over by the teacher.

10. Recent investigations of speech use in conversational argumentation (Brenneis and Lein 1977; Boggs 1978; Boggs and Lein 1978) suggest that children's concern with self-esteem is not limited to their management of folkloric interaction.

11. Although only a few of the narrators became more than mildly irritated if they lost the floor, the reactions of those few make

explicit the association of the narrator's role with self-esteem, expressive ability, and speaking rights. Preceding the exchange given below, Jody (7) had been involved in a peer-group story-telling event at which I was not present. He came running to me, crying, from another part of the playground:

DR: What's the matter with you, Jody?

Jody: ( ) but he already did it, and I

DR: But that's nothing to cry about, Jody. It's not his fault that he already knew your joke

Jody: Yeah, he knew the joke, but he said it, and I'm supposed to say it

Although this exchange points out some of the expectations for story-telling in interaction not observed by an adult, it should be kept in mind that the data discussed in this report was obtained in a folkloric collecting session at which an adult was present. The rules and behaviors treated are those the children chose to employ in that context. We possess little information about how youngsters conduct storytelling when left completely to their own devices. The work of Watson-Gegeo and Boggs (1977) may be unique in that respect.

12. The following bidding event, which prefaced a non-narrative rendering, illustrates some of the usual moves made. The bidding begins with each participant's trying to claim the floor, yet no one is able to demonstrate an adequate expressive competence in his item. As the children become caught up in trying to remember the rhyme, they co-operate with one another, a relatively rare occurrence. Their efforts are finally co-opted by a youngster who self-confidently asserts and then demonstrates his knowledge of the piece:

Brett (7): There's that one, um

Wes (7): Firecrackers, firecrackers

Jack (7): No, I know, I know, I know one

?: Oh Yeah, um

Aaron (7): Three little monkeys, sittin on the bed

Jack: No, I know, I know, I know one, I know one.
[chants:] I had a little baby
His name was [pause]

Brett: Tiny Tim

Jack:	Yeah, he
?:	Yeah, that's right
Jack:	He [pause] I
Carla (6):	[sings:] I had a baby brother His name was Tiny Tim
?:	Can we sing that one that I sang last time? Teddy bear (Teddy bear)
Jack:	(What is that? Tiny Tim
Wes?	Three little monkeys, drank some gas. I don't know it
Jack:	What was that one? I had a [pause] little baby named [pause] a little baby brother named Tiny Tim [rising intonation]
?:	Say it
Jack:	Put him in the bathtub to see if he can swim
?:	Oh! Oh!
Jack:	He he ate up all the soap, no, no, he dran-, no, he ate up all the soap, he tried to eat the bathtub, [pause] I don't know it
Aaron:	I'll tell you. I know it um [sings:] I had a little baby [continues through the rhyme's conclusion]

13. McDowell (1979) cites a similar expectation as operating during children's riddling interactions.

14. Usually from the end of the bidding through the orientation section (Labov and Waletzky 1967) and his description of the first encounter between the characters (Roemer 1977).

15. In serving that function, the comments reminded the narrator that he could not successfully engage in 'one-up-man's-ship' by virtue of telling a specific tale because his listeners had already heard it.

16. In this respect, the children's operational definition of a narrative depended on their understanding of participant role privileges relative to the allocation of speaking rights.

17. The notion of the 'linguistic routine' was developed by Hymes (1962, 1971) and has served in discussions of children's folkloric and conversation-like verbal interaction (Watson 1975; Bauman 1977a; Brenneis and Lein 1977; Roemer 1977; Boggs and Watson-Gegeo 1978; Lein and Brenneis 1978; McDowell 1979).

18. 'Asides' in which a narrator offered commentary on his own story-telling were not unusual:

> Cami (7): when he was finished he just did something, I don't know, read a book ( ), he read a book, I'm just gonna say that, ok, the second little pig met a man [continues; italics mine]

Narrators' statements such as "you know?" (said with a rising intonation and followed by a brief pause) also served as second-move metanarration. Their function was rhetorical, not critical, as a narrator requested confirmation that his preceding speech had been heard and understood by his listeners.

William Labov (1972:371) has commented on utterances serving what I have described here as 'second-move functions': "The narrator can stop the narrative, turn to the listener, and tell him what the point [of the narration] is. This is a common trait of middle-class narrators, who frequently interrupt the course of their narrative."

19. For example:

> Cami (7): and he [drawn out:] blew [normal speech:] the little house in, and then and they didn't know it was blowin in, they thought the door was still shut, they thought the door was shut, and then they opened it, and then they saw ( ), and then they ran, and he didn't know, and then they ( )

20. Keith Kernan (1977:97) has noted a similar use of narrative clauses by storytellers among Black girls, aged seven through fourteen years. Kernan observes that 'repetitions' serving "to pick up the story line following an interruption from the audience...indicate something of the narrator's notion of 'wellformedness of the narrative in terms of the sequencing of clauses."

21. Whether the second move was explicit or not, this pattern evidences the organization of speech that Erving Goffman (1976:290) has

described as the "mentionable event, [the] mention, [and the] comment on the mention."

22. The 'comment' produced by the child entering the group is non-verbal.

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